



## **Gospel Impact – Part 5**

### **When It Demands Your Life**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

It's been great to have our child dedications this weekend, all throughout the weekend, meeting these parents. And I feel bad in part because when I get up here with these parents, they often talk about how hard it is, how much harder it is now, and they do have a lot of disadvantages trying to raise good, godly kids in this generation. But one advantage they have certainly is all the options of TV shows for kids, right? All these videos that are streamed online. I mean, if you're raising kids in the middle of raising little kids, you surely know words like Cocomelon. Right? Paw Patrol, Bluey, Blippi, Daniel Tiger. I mean, just all these weird things that are out there for kids and you sit these kids in front of them, it's all pretty sweet and saccharine and innocuous and, you know, seems somewhat harmless.

But I just got to tell you, back in the day, like the day when we were walking uphill both ways to school, those days, (audience laughs) the choices, number one, were really limited. I grew up here in L.A. County, up the road, and even here we had, you know, just a couple of channels to choose from. And then you hope that from those channels we had, like, you know, the cartoons going on after school. And the ones that we had, I mean, they sounded sweet and innocuous like Tom and Jerry. You know, and if you saw a still, I guess, of that cute little mouse and cute little, you know, cat, you thought well that was kind of good. But what's that all about? Well, it's about a lot of blunt-force trauma is what it's about. (audience laughs) A lot of pain. There's a lot of stuff like getting hurt. I mean, amazing.

And then you turn on, like the Roadrunner and Wile E. Coyote. I mean, you just think of what we were watching. I mean, you couldn't get through an episode without dynamite blowing like the main characters up. It was like wrecking balls to the face. It was like being tossed off of high cliffs. It was amazing. And then if you ever watched Dudley Do-Right, that was way back. And I'm going way back. I saw him in reruns, but way back, Dudley Do-Right, they had this guy Snidely, remember him? Oh, what was his name? Whiplash. Snidely Whiplash. This guy was always tying women to railroad tracks. I just want you to think about the gruesome nature of that. Right? Tying a person to a railroad track. Think about it.

Well, I did think about it. I thought about it this week because sometimes when the weather's just right, I can be, you know, a mile from the tracks there that run down parallel the I-5 freeway, you know, heading down to the, you know, the station there in San Juan Capistrano and you'll hear the train. And I heard the train, you know. And there it was, I thought the train's coming. I thought of Snidely Whiplash. I thought now can you imagine if the train was coming and you were tied to the tracks? That would be horrific. Now it's a whole different experience if you're on the platform waiting for your friend to come in and you're there at San Juan Capistrano and here comes the big train, like, ah, that's great. But if you're tied to the tracks, you have a whole different experience. And it's not just a difference of perspective, although it is a different perspective looking at the train coming your way, but it's a difference of like radically significant experience.



Now all that to say this, that probably you're conditioned by our culture to think that conversations about religion, Christianity, well, let's talk about you if you claim to be a Christian today, the Christian life is all really just a debate about different perspectives. Like, you know, you got one perspective here and one perspective there and you kind of deciding between perspectives. I just got to tell you, when it comes to the truth claims of Scripture, this is not about different perspectives, although it is that. Right? If someone comes and says, well, "There's no other name under heaven given among men by which you must be saved." Or Jesus, "The way, the truth of life. No one comes to Father except through him." If you're going to share that with your neighbor, he can have a different perspective. But what we're saying is, no, no, this is what God has said. He's revealed himself in a book. He's got his fingerprints all over. He's verified this through predictive prophecy. This is what God says. And if God says this, this has a little different authority to it than just you getting opinions from people.

See the Bible, as I often say, isn't man's best thoughts about God. Right? Like a lot of religious books are, here's a prophet, here's a seer, here's a guru, and they've got these thoughts about the afterlife. They got thoughts about God. We're not just looking at man's best thoughts about God. The whole claim of Scripture, backed up by so many things in itself is that these are God's thoughts on paper. God is speaking. God has spoken. As J. Parker put it, God has spoken. And it's clear, right? He got it from Hebrews Chapter 1. But God said what he thinks.

Now you can say, "That's not my perspective" and you can say it even from the confines of a church where you say, I am a Christian. But then the preacher gets up and preaches and says, "Here's what God says," and you still can think, "Well, that's just a matter of perspective. I can choose to, you know, agree with that perspective or not agree with that perspective." But you got to realize that the truth of God, even after you become a Christian, you got a lot of things you got to learn about God before you become a Christian and then you become a Christian. It is celebrated by the ordinance of baptism. And then according to the Great Commission you are supposed to then be taught all that Christ has commanded. And yet here's the verb, "taught to observe all that Christ commanded."

So to observe it, to observe it is to be able to say, I am not only just going to say, "Well, I will adopt that perspective, but this becomes my constitution. This becomes a lamp to my feet, a light to my path. This becomes the thing that directs my life." And so every sermon, and it's not just a sermon, every time you open the Bible in the morning and you read a passage of Scripture, here are the words that God is saying, and you've got a choice to make. And the choice is not just do I buy the perspective of what I read this morning, or you buy a book at our bookstore, a good Christian book or some theology text, you start reading it. It's not like, "Well, I need to see if I can adjust my perspective to that."

This is about really us deciding, as Jesus put it, whether we're going to see it and hear it and then choose to do it because we're not supposed to be hearers of the word we're supposed to be doers of the word. And he says, and if you do what I say, if you not only just adopt that perspective, but you embrace this reality, well, then you'd be like "a wise man who builds his



house on the rock. If you hear my words and don't put them into practice, well, then you're like the fool who builds this house on the sand." The consequences are huge. They're sweeping, they're eternal. And I mean that for you as Christians.

It's not just about non-Christians and Christians and Paul's here in Athens as we get to this passage, the last five verses of Acts 17, and we say, "Well, yeah, that's important for non-Christians to know." Right? But you as a Christian seeking to learn to observe all that Christ commanded, every time you're presented with something, something comes from the text of Scripture, whether it's, "Hey, you ought to gather together in person and all the more as you see the day drawing near." You can go, "Well, that's kind of my perspective." No, no. But is this the thing that you adopt, you hear it and you do it? If it is well, then that's one kind of response. And if you just kind of see it as, "Well, I'm not sure I'm buying that." Well, then we disregard it and we kind of treat it like it's just another opinion, then we've got to recognize that we're really gambling with what goes beyond this life.

Because the Bible says even Christians are going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. It's all over the Bible. Second Corinthians 5, Romans 14, First Corinthians 3. The Bible is all about saying every servant of Christ is going to stand before his master and give an account. Jesus told endless parables on this topic. He going to call his servants and his stewards, and they're going have to give an account and there will be a reckoning. And that's like huge. Every time you read a text, every time you hear a biblical sermon, every time you read a good, solid Christian book, you going to have a grapple with how you respond to that. It's not only going to change your perspective, which of course it does, it's going to change what happens to you as a result of what you do with that.

The last five verses of Acts Chapter 17 make this point really well. We've been in this section where Paul is in Athens and he's dealing with these people, what we call the Areopagus, this council of Athens. They met on some porch, some portico here in the, you know, the marketplace where they met together. And so this was an important place, an important city, obviously a storied history. And here are the professors and the scholars and the philosophers of the age. He'd already talked to the Epicureans and the Stoics, but now they bring them to the experts and he's there and he addressed them last week. We saw some of the principles that he talked about, but now he's going to really just bring it home, drive it home to the response. What are you going to do about it?

So let's pick it up in verse 30, we'll read through the end of the chapter verses 30 through 34 and let us figure out what it is exactly that might apply to us even if we sit here today and say, "I've already done what he's saying here." Well, you can spend the rest of your life in something called progressive sanctification, responding to truth claims, truth claims from Scripture. And it's much like the paradigm of coming to faith in Christ, your justification, and how are you going to respond.

So let me read this text for you. Put your eyeballs on it if you would, Acts Chapter 17 verses 30 through 34. I'll read it from the English Standard Version, Acts 17 verse 30, ESV. "The Times of..." What's the next word? "Ignorance." Remember we made a point of the unknown



God, this unknown idol that you have here and what you worship as unknown. That same word is here, right? The alpha negation particle at the beginning of this Greek word, and then the word "gnosis," right? A different form of it. Gnosis means knowledge, diagnosis, prognosis. Right? The gnostics. So what you've done and kind of not knowing and you've kind of like, I don't have it figured out. Well, he's saying "the times of ignorance" where you're kind of agnostic about things, you didn't figure things out, "God overlooked." You're still here. He hasn't dealt with you yet in that regard, but now you just got a whole dose of truth, which this is Luke's summary of it. Right? It's a God-breathed summary of it all.

But Paul probably said a lot here to the Athenian leaders, and he says that now God, look at the next word, he suggests, underline the word suggests. Do you see that there? That you adopt his perspective? No. He now commands. That's a word, isn't it? Yeah, it is a word. Commands. "He commands all people everywhere to repent." Oh, man, that's pretty serious stuff. Yeah. God's saying you didn't know, you didn't figure it out, you were probably content as we tried to identify with the places in our lives where we still, as Christians, are comfortable with our own agnosticism in some area. God may have overlooked that, but once you get the dose of truth and he's given him a dose of truth regarding the gospel, and once you get a good sermon on giving, on serving, on prayer, on evangelism, once you get the truth, the times of overlooking your ignorance are over. Right? Now, you got the truth. Now he's commanding a response.

And in this case, "all people everywhere are to repent." And that repentance, by the way, is a word that is used more often of Christians and for Christians and prescribed to Christians than non-Christians, although that's how the Christian life starts. I get it. Repentance was the word in Greek "Metanoia" that was shouted out when the Greek armies were supposed to turn around. You're going one way. Stop. Turn around. Go the other way. Of course, it starts with the concept of your thinking needs to be changed. That's why it is perspective. "Meta" after "Noia," from "Nous, the word "mind," you're thinking, you should think differently. But to think differently is, I'm going to stop doing this. I'm going to move in this direction.

So whatever you are thinking about, whatever it is prior to a particular sermon or a particular Bible study or a particular book that you read, once I deal with the truth and I have it, now God's not going to overlook your ignorance anymore. Now you know. Now you're responsible. Now you need to repent, you need to go a different direction. You need to align yourself with what Christ said. Why? Well, it'd be great if there were a period there or an exclamation point to be like, "Wow, that was a powerful ending to the sermon, Paul." But he says, "because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world," man. This is getting like what grandpa would say here. This is rough stuff, right? You are going to repent and if you don't repent, you're going to be judged.

"Turn or burn! "I don't want to be a part of that." Well, you don't have to put it that way. But how about this? Repent or you're going to be judged. It still feels the same. You don't have to walk around with flames on a sandwich board downtown. But the idea is you better get it right. If you don't get it right, if you don't align yourself with what God says, it's going to be judgment. And it's not like he's thinking about it. Look at how he puts it, "he's fixed the day."



That should send a chill up your spine. He's fixed the day. Here's one day it wasn't - yesterday. But he's fixed the day and he didn't pencil it in. He fixed it. "A day on which he will judge the world." And you've defined what world means there in verse 30, every person, "everywhere." So every person.

And he's going to do it "in righteousness," that's an important phrase, and by a man whom he has appointed." Well, who's that? "Of this we have been given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." If you've been to Sunday School you know that's Christ. We're not talking about Lazarus. This is Christ. So Jesus from Bethlehem and Galilee is now going to be the one who sits and evaluates everyone, whether or not, in this case a messenger, Paul, gives the truth about who he is, whether or not you respond to it, you're going to be judged by that man who's risen from the dead and so you better repent. You better align yourself with what God says.

Don't think about your non-Christian neighbor, even though we should think about him. Not now. Think about you. With every single message you've heard regarding a biblical truth that was clearly laid out in front of you, what are you going to do with it? What are you going to do with the passage you just read? What are you going to do with the Scripture you just studied? What are you going to do with that Christian book you just read? You need to do something with it. Because you're going to be held accountable. That's the picture here.

Now, the response, verse 32, "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked." Now, why does that make sense based on what we've studied? What did I teach you really briefly about the Stoics and the Epicurean philosophers? They did not have a developed eschatology regarding what happens in the afterlife. Matter of fact, they were pretty clear about it's not going to be a conscious awareness afterlife. So don't worry about that. It's about the "here and now" and the Epicureans and the Stoics had different views on that and how you should make the most of this life. But the idea was, don't worry about having to answer to someone afterwards. That's not the picture they had.

So they heard it with their conditioning and some of them mocked. You know what that means, right? Ridiculed, laughed, rolled their eyes. Okay? "Others," though, middle of verse 32, they "said, 'We will hear you again about this.'" We'd like to hear some more. But it was over for now. "So Paul went out from their midst. But some," here's the third response, "joined him and believed." Right? I'm no longer going to be with this group, at least what they're teaching. I'm now going to be with your group and what you're teaching, even though there's no group here. Paul was here with a skeleton crew, if any, and they say, "We're going to follow Christ, we're going to believe what he says. We're going to do what he says." That's big. And they trusted. They believed. We got repentance, we got faith, we got joining in with this new form of teaching.

"Among them also were Dionysius the Areopagite." Wow. That's a business card there, right? Dionysius the Areopagite. But don't forget where we are. We're in this council of Athens. They were known as the Areopagus. "Ares" means "Mars." "Pagos" in Greek is "Hill." Mars Hill is what you're used to hearing sometimes the old King James translation, Mars Hill. That's what





this is. But they're not at Mars Hill, which is just outside of the marketplace, the agora. They are in probably the marketplace in one of the big columned porticos, porches, and they are part of this council.

Well, here's a guy who's a part of the council. You can look at it that way. Dionysius is a part of the council. That's a bigwig. That's one of the experts and one of the philosophers, one of the professors of the University of Athens. He says, "I'm going to become a Christian. I'm going to repent. I'm going to join you guys. I'm going to believe." That's huge. That's why he's named and also "a woman Damaris," named Damaris. So who's the Damaris? I don't know, but she's important. Just like we've seen Lydia and others in Berea and Thessalonica and back into the previous chapter in Philippi. We know that he's naming people who have significance and importance and some high status in town.

So whoever she is, maybe she was part of the Areopagus, we're not sure. Maybe just one of the professors at the university. And then a bunch of other people who aren't quite as name-worthy, apparently, but other people did too. So we got some mocking, some saying we need more information. We'll talk about it later. And then you got some people joining and believing and repenting, obviously, from verse 30. Great. The response is important. I kind of set us up for that. We got to consider the response.

But before we consider our response to every encounter with biblical truth, which is where I want you to think, what we need to start with is why is that such a different thing, to deal with biblical truth than just someone talking about politics or philosophy or, you know, pedagogy or something that they do out there in the world. It's like, why is theology different? Well, it's different because it claims to be God's stuff. It claims to be from your maker. So we need to think about biblical demands that come inherent with biblical truth.

Number one in your outline, we need to "Understand the Demand of Truth," shorthand for the truth that comes from God, the truth that is coming from God's word. Biblical truth claims, let's put it that way, they have a certain nature. The demand has a certain, you know, aspect to it. And I think we can see six of them laid out in this passage. So let's look at the first one, "The times of ignorance God has overlooked, but now he commands," the sentence goes on but he was not like holding them accountable for stuff they didn't know, but now they know. And now he's commanding a response, the right response we'll get to in a second.

So that picture there is like you didn't know, now you know, now you must respond. There's a sense in which you're locked into this now that you know. Which I think even non-Christians, I had a non-Christian say to me very clearly, "You mean to tell me that now that you told me this and explained it so clearly, I'm more responsible than when before you told me that? Like, thanks, man." He didn't want to become a Christian, but he caught the sense of the obligation because that's what truth demands do, biblical truth. The demand of it, it obligates. Letter "A," "It Obligates." It puts you in obligation to respond.

Just like if I got up here, let's just say this is, you know, an illustration, but if I say, "Hey, I just found out that all the water that Kirkland makes." Right? They don't make the water but you



know what I mean, they bottle it up. You buy it in the flats and crates. I don't know why we don't drink out of the faucet, but when we were watching Tom and Jerry, we drank out of the faucet, out of the hose in the summer. Whatever. That's why we're so messed up. (audience laughs) But if I said, "Kirkland water now it's laced with hydrochloride and it will kill you. So I just have it on good authority. So I'm just going to tell you that." Now, you got to do something with a claim like that because it reaches right into, like, your own mortality. This could kill you. I'm just telling you right now, all the Kirkland water bottles, I don't care what size you bought. The teeny, tiny little ones, which I don't know why you buy those, or the regular size one or you're really trying to do stuff and you got a big one. If it says Kirkland and it comes from Costco, here's the thing, man. It's going to kill you.

Okay. Now, if I said that to you and I explained it to you and how it happened, when it happened, you'd have to decide whether you want to believe me, whether you're going to do anything about it, whether you're going to roll your eyes and go, "You're crazy, I'm going to mock you. You don't know what you're talking about," or whether you're going to say, "Well I'm going to do some more research on this. Let me go figure this out." Or you're going to say, "Oh, man, never again. I'm not drinking any of that," and you're going to believe me. So you got responses when that kind of claim comes.

Well truth claims from the Bible are the same way. We're talking about heaven and hell. We're talking about life and death. Or as Christians, we're talking about God's blessing and taking hold of the real life that is to come. We're getting a foretaste of it. Or as it says, "if we sow to the flesh we reap from the flesh corruption" or some damage to ourselves, damage that will then be even transgressing into the next life when we stand before Christ at the Bema Seat, it's going to be wood, hand, straw and all of that we're going to suffer loss, we're going to feel bad about that. Not for long, but we're going to feel bad and will have ramifications for eternity. So it matters because it's such an important claim. And truth claims from the Bible they obligate us in particular ways that are huge. It's very important for us to recognize that.

Ezekiel 33. I don't have time to turn there but at least jot that down. If you're really a Sunday school grad, you might remember Ezekiel 33 is about the watchman at the wall. Remember that? God has made the Prophet Ezekiel like a watchman at the wall. He illustrates like if the watchman sees the enemies approaching and he doesn't warn the people then who is obligated? "But the blood will be upon the hands of the watchman," because he didn't warn them. But what "if the watchman sees the army and sounds the trumpet and tells the people, 'Hey, we're in danger.'" Well, then guess who's obligated? The people who hear that information. Just like if it were true that the waters are filled with arsenic or whatever and I said to you, "Here." Now it's up to you, you're obligated to deal with it. The onus comes on you.

If you still got Acts 17, then scroll down to Acts 18 and look at what happens here in just that simple principle is everywhere in the Scripture. Verse 6 Chapter 18. "When they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent.'" Now, he wouldn't be innocent if he didn't get the information to them. Right? And so God has given us his word, right? And we're preaching it. We're teaching it. We're



trying to get you to read it. We're trying to get you to study it. We're trying to get you the best brains that we have currently in our bookstore to be writing things to help you work through it so you get it. But once you get it, you're obligated. Even a little at a time, if you understand something about what God obligates us to do, and it's in his word, it can be properly explained to you, you are now bound, the onus is upon you and the responsibility is on you.

Look at the next line in this text. Back to verse 30. "Times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." What does he command? "All people everywhere to repent." All people everywhere to repent. Does that sound like all people everywhere? It does because it is all people everywhere. So here comes the information. Now, everyone who hears this information, they are obligated. And they're not obligated as like groups or nations, they are obligated as people, as individuals. That's an important thing to note about biblical truth claims. Right?

Let's put it down this way. Letter "B." What is the nature of it? What is the demand of it? "It's a Demand to Individuals," always to individuals. And I say that not just because I'm trying to, you know, read into this text, why is it so emphasized? Because the theme of Scripture so often says, please remember, if you can try to be exonerated from obligation, you will do it based on your group, based on your tribe, based on your church. And I say that because you see that all the time in Jesus' ministry, even in John the Baptist. Think of Luke 3 for a minute. He's out there preaching. He sees their eyebrows start to go up and he says, "Now don't you start to say that you're children of Abraham," right? Don't think you're okay because you're part of a group, and you know that the Scripture was given to Abraham and, you know, you have all of this coming from Israel." Stop. It's not about the group.

Let me help illustrate this. If I said to you, you know what we need? If I preach the sermon for the next, you know, 3 hours on "we need a reliance upon prayer" or "we need a high view of God." And I really made the case and I leaned in, you can go, "I'm so glad I'm part Compass Bible Church. That's our value. That's what we do, right? We have a high view of God. We rely on prayer. It's on the walls. It's on the website. It's on the bulletin." Check. Right? Would that matter? That would not matter.

It does not matter at all that you're part of the church that has a high view of God plastered on the wall and that's our value. It doesn't even matter that that may be the value of your pastors. It doesn't matter. If you see in the Bible that you're supposed to maintain a high view of God, as we talked about the last two weeks, or if you've seen in the Bible you're supposed to have a reliance on prayer, right? It doesn't matter if your organization believes that, it doesn't matter if your group believes that. It doesn't matter if you're young, if your parents believe in that. It doesn't matter if your family believes in that. It doesn't matter if your wife believes. I don't care who in your circle or your tribe believes in that. What matters is that you as an individual do something about that and that you believe it and that you deal with that information.

Because guess what? Your family won't be there at the Bema Seat judgment, not standing next to you at least. It's a one-on-one, mano-e-mano kind of thing that goes on at the Bema





Seat. You're going to have to answer individually. You can't say, "Well, I went to a church that had a reliance on prayer." God is going to ask you about YOUR prayer life. It doesn't matter about the group. When Jesus, by the way, had all this great teaching going on in the gospel of John, the Pharisees said, "We have Abraham as our father," right? Just exactly what John the Baptist anticipated in Luke 3. And, you know, do you remember Jesus' snarky response, which he has all entitlement to be snarky? How did he snarkily respond to them? You're a child of Abraham? "God can raise up children of Abraham from these rocks." Like whoop-dee-doo is what he said. Right? Is it important? Was Abraham important? Sure. But you trying to get out of the obligation of what I'm saying because you're part of the right group. Stop it with that.

And I know I don't see a ton of, like, teenagers here, but I remember being raised in a church, and I was writing and it wasn't just a conscious thing, it was a subconscious thing that it was all about my parents and the family's commitment. And I had to finally get to where God, by his grace and the truth, started to obligate me as an individual. Like, it does not matter what my church believes. It doesn't matter what my parents believe. It doesn't matter what my family does. What matters is me and God. Am I going to respond to this truth? I just think it's a tendency and we can't hide in groups.

What's the next line? Why should I repent? Why should I change and adhere and conform and get my life in line with whatever truth it is, whether it's the salvation message of trusting in Christ and repenting, or whether it's me embracing another part of what I'm supposed to observe in something that Christ commanded. Why? Well, because "he's fixed a day in which he will judge the world." Dude, that's like, intense. Like he'll judge the world.

I'll put it this way, Letter "C." The demand of truth always has this nature to it, "It is of Consequence," right? The demand of truth it is of consequence. It's not that it doesn't matter. And this is going back to my illustration at the intro. This is not about your perspective. It's not like you're going to get a Scantron test at the end of life like what did you believe? It is about the reality of saying, not only do I believe it, I did it, and in doing it there was fruit. Fruit that either was in some way rewarded and blessed and favored by God, or it was in some way opposed by God or disciplined by God. Or it will mean deprivation at the Bema Seat. It has consequence.

And certainly when you think of non-Christians, you think of that all the time. I hope you pray for your non-Christians, that you share the gospel, but this is not a sermon about that, right? You should pray it and you're very concerned that there's heaven and hell at stake. But as I quoted from Galatians, you do understand that every response to truth that you have is either going to give you a taste, a foretaste, I think that's the right thinking of that passage in sowing to the Spirit and reaping eternal life. It's the kind of eternal life that First Timothy 6 talks about where you "take hold of that which is life indeed." You're doing something in this thing that comports with where we're headed. It's fulfilling, it's gratifying. It comes with blessing and favor. It's good. Or we sow to the flesh and we disregard what God says.



I mean, I just use a couple of examples that we've used. Like if the Bible says "you ought to be gathering together and all the more as you see the day drawing near." I don't have time for that, I don't want to do that. And you say, "No, I'm not interested in that." Or I'll just think about it later and maybe there's another book I can read on it, or maybe I can consider it, or I'll listen to another sermon on that or I'll, you know, I'll just deal with it later and you close the book. All I'm telling you is there are consequences to that. And God is always careful to say there will be corruption. There will at the very least be discipline. And you've got to know there's consequence. Truth is always something that comes with great consequence. That's a sermon on its own but this has got 100 sub-points so we have to keep going.

He's going to "judge the world" in what? Verse 31, "in righteousness." In righteousness. That's a good word, in righteousness. Oh, by the way, I didn't tell you. Did you know, we had a guy here last week who came on campus like he was 40, 45? Big guy, tall, like, portly, a big strong guy. He came in and he didn't go into the little kid's room. He came into like the kid's classrooms and started punching our children in the face. Yeah. Yeah, I know. It's horrible. It's an illustration. It didn't really happen. (audience laughs) And I have to say that stronger than whispering that because every time I use an illustration like that, I get people like a week later like, "Oh, what happened to that dude, man?" It's an illustration. It's an illustration. It's an illustration. It didn't happen.

But if for just a second you heard it and you thought, "Oh man, is he telling me the truth?" If you believed that, how did you feel? Right? If I said, "Well, you know what I did when I heard he was punching all of our children? I went and I just put my arm around him and I said, 'Jesus loves you.' I said, 'it's great to have you here. Why don't you stop hanging out there and come on into the main auditorium.'" That's not what you felt. Right? And you may think it's ungodly to feel what you really felt, which is let's bring him in the back. We can wait a while till we call the sheriff's department. We have a different kind of laying on of hands that will go on in the back room. We'll get the biggest guys in our church back there and we want to do some counseling before we send his butt to jail." Right?

I mean, that's what you would feel. He's punching our children in the face. Some big dude that came in off the street. What are you talking about? Right? Your indignation to want to punish someone who does something wrong, particularly to our children. Right? I mean, this is like it just evokes all of this emotion and indignation and anger. It's that sense of justice. And if you think about it, it's right to feel it. Unless you have some milquetoast theology and think I shouldn't feel anything any time about anything that's... Stop. Your indignation and your sense are why the whole movie industry with the shoot-em-up movies, you're always like, "Yeah!" Right? Because the bad guy gets his just due. And all I'm saying is every act of judgment from God is in that category.

It's in that category, and it is done in righteousness. I put it this way, Letter "D," "It Is Right." The demand of truth is right. It is right that it's demanded and it's right that it is punished if it is not done. It is right that it is demanded and it's right if you as a Christian ignore it and build your house on the sand. The fall is going to be great. Even in a small aspect of your Christian life if you say, "You know, I know the Bible says I should give, but I don't give because, you



know, I got a lot of reasons I don't give and I just ignore all that part." Well, if you do that, it is right that God responds as he says he will in Hebrews Chapter 12 or in First Corinthians Chapter 9. I could go on.

All over the Scripture. the Bible says there will be consequences for my children if they disobey me. If Dad walks in, he tells me to do something and I'm there in my blue-collar Long Beach home and I say, "I don't... I'll think about it later," right? That ain't going to go well. There's going to be a response and the response is, and all I'm telling you is from God's perspective, very just and here's why.

This is how the book of Hebrews puts it, because every time you know the right thing to do and you do not do it, you think I'm going to quote James, but I going to quote Hebrews now, we are trampling underfoot the blood of Christ. Right? The picture is we are hurting his Son. Right? Christ died for every sin, every gossip, every act of compromise, every lie. All of that is something that was laid on his Son. And when you say, "I'm just not going to follow that. I'm just going to continue on my way. I'm not going to repent. I heard the truth, but I don't want to do it. I'm not interested. It's inconvenient. I will justify a rationalization..." It's like we're trampling his Son under our feet. That's how it's put. So is God justified in judging those who disregard what he says clearly? Yeah. Right? It's of consequence and it is right. The command is right and any response is right.

Look at the next line. "He's going to judge ... by a man whom he has appointed." Does that bother you just a little bit? You people with good doctrine, you have good ecclesiology and good Christology. You know that the Church should always defend the deity of Christ. And here Paul is there talking to the philosophers, and he calls Jesus a man. Why does he call him a man? Well, because he is a man. You know he's a man, right? That's the whole point of the incarnation. He becomes a man. But he doesn't become a man at the expense of no longer being God. So he's still God, the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form, but he's also a man.

So what is that? "Why are you talking about that here?" Because we're talking about judgment. And we're talking about a day when you're going to be judged for every truth that you received. And that truth then we're going to look at your life and your response to that truth and there's going to be a man who judges you and that man is the one, and we see this in the next line, we know who it is, it's Christ raised from the dead.

Why does that matter? Here's why it matters. Turn with me to Hebrews Chapter 4. It matters because I think you and I might say that God, you know, "I know he's God and everything, but he really doesn't quite understand what it's like to live in the 21st century with all this temptation and all these options and all these problems and all these pressures. And of course the early church, they didn't have anything to do. They were bored. They could get together in church all the time and they didn't have anything to spend their money on so they could give. And, you know, they were bored. So they were serving. And I can't serve because my life's exciting. Got stuff to do. I got things I spend my money on. I don't have to do all of



that. They're excited about evangelism because Christ is coming back soon. I just know I don't have to do all that."

All I'm saying is that Jesus is going to be on the throne, John 5 says he will be judging... all judgment is given to the Son, not only for non-Christians, but it also says he will be exalted on the Bema Seat and every servant, First Corinthians Chapter 3, Roman Chapter 14, Second Corinthians Chapter 5, he himself will judge every Christian. Christ will judge his Church. Right? He's a man. Why does that matter? Bottom of Chapter 4. Let's go down to verse 14, Hebrews 4:14. Talking to the Christian now, "Since we have a high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God." So we're not talking about a human high priest, we're not talking about Caiaphas. We're talking about now as Christians, my high priest who represents me before God is Jesus and he has now been exalted and vindicated, he's at the right hand of the Father.

Since he is a great high priest for us "let us hold fast to our confession." He's the king. He's the boss, he represents me before God, laid down his life for me. So I should do what I confessed. And what I confessed was he's the Lord. He's the king. He's the boss. I should do what he says. I became a disciple, a learner of Christ, and I should observe all that he commands. So I'm going to do that. Okay. That's your confession. Now, you ought to keep it. You ought to do it. You ought to hold fast to it. And you ought to do it even when you think, "Oh, this is really hard." I don't think these rules are too hard. Maybe he should grade on a curve. "For we do not," verse 15, "have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect," every respect - time, pressures, desires, aspirations, concerns, fatigue, whatever it is that makes you say, I don't have to do that. "In every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

So he went through all the trials and he even magnified those trials by doing things like fasting for 40 days in the desert. Satan sent in to tempt him. I mean, he was at his low point and he got all the attacks of the enemy and he didn't sin. Okay? So, first application, "Hey, let us draw near to the throne of grace, and receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." We'll receive mercy. We'll get grace. He'll help us because he knows what it's like. Chapter 5 verse 1. "Every high priest chosen among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God." That's what the high priest does, "to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin. Now he," this human high priest, "can deal gently with the ignorant and the wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness." Okay?

Now that's going to become the paradigm here in the explanation of well, Christ is like that only better because he didn't sin and every priest does sin and the high priest sins. But he certainly understands sin because he understands human weakness. And the point is, the high priest understands human weakness. And that's why when all these campaigns about Jesus, you know, keep getting rebranded and you'll hear it today at the Super Bowl and a billion dollars spent on this campaign that "he gets us," right? The commercial says, "He gets us, man." I don't know. I can't be cool enough to make it sound like it's supposed to sound. I don't look the part, but "he gets us." Right?



Here's what he doesn't get. He doesn't get you sinning. Right? He doesn't get that. And by the way, that whole commercial seems like a cover as it's presented, because I know how people are, I've been in this for a long time, how people receive things like that. Like, it's cool, he sympathizes, he understands you, right? Well, and then the pitch even as a... And if you don't know what I'm talking about, don't worry. The idea you understand that we think Christ understands our sin. Like, I get it. I get it. I get it. He understands our temptation. Right? But he said things like this: No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. But God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you're able." I'm quoting now First Corinthians 10. And of course, this is what the apostles wrote, sent by Christ, Christ is saying these things to his Church. "And with every temptation he will provide a way of escape."

He does not get you falling into sin. He gets the pain of you fighting sin and he fought it even in the garden, Right? This is the whole reason he came. "Go die on the cross." "I don't want to die on the cross. It's painful, but not what I want. I don't want it but what you want. So I'm going to do the hard thing." Is it hard to give? Is it hard to serve? Is it hard to evangelize? Is it hard to pray? Is it hard to memorize Scripture? It's HARD. He gets the part that it's hard, but he expects you to do it. See? And so you should understand that the judgment is going to come from one who says, "I understand the pain, but it is no excuse." And that makes the judgment reasonable.

It's not like Martians have figured out like how human beings should live and they know nothing about how life is here on earth. God, of course he understands, he has every right to put whatever stipulations and bring whatever consequences he wants. But Jesus now has lived among us and he knows what it's like on this planet as a human being. And he now is going to be the one who judges us. And when you say, "Yeah, but it was..." He goes, "I understand that, I've been there, but you got to do what is right." And when you fall you got to repent. Which he doesn't understand that in the sense of experientially knowing that, but he understands what it is to be tempted in every way as we are. So he is the rightful judge. It's reasonable is what I'm saying. All of it is reasonable. The demands are reasonable. He's not going to demand something, that's a Letter "E" by the way, "It Is Reasonable." The demand of truth is a reasonable demand.

Unfortunately, this is the problem with so much preaching. "It's like all the rules are just there to show us that we fall short." They are. I get that. They show us we fall short. But here's the thing, as a Christian now you have all the resources. You've got the Spirit of God, you've got the word of God. You have everything that you've been given to where I can say no temptations have overtaken you except that it's common. Everyone has it. Jesus has had it. But God is faithful and "he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability." This is doable. This is reasonable. And I get that you fail. I fail. We fail. I understand. But that's not the part Jesus gets because he's so hip and cool, right? What matters is that he expects you to do this without rationalization, without excuse. And when you fail. Great, fantastic. Go to the throne of grace. Get your mercy and find grace to help in times of need. But then get back on the beam and make this work. These commands are reasonable.





There's an Old Testament equivalent to that. I don't have time to get into that. But even the Law of Moses, which seems so hard with all those commands, 400 plus commands in the Old Testament, it's like, it's not too hard for you God says through Moses, you can do this. It's right there. But in their moral rebellion they didn't. Understand the demands of truth that obligates, it's for individuals, that's you, it's got consequence, it's right, it's reasonable.

And then the last thing he throws in here, he's given us assurance that this is the guy. He's wearing the badge. Why? Because he's been risen from the dead. He's given us assurance to all by raising him from the dead. Right? God didn't do that with anyone else. And what I'm saying is we have no impervious person who is not ever going to die that has had the resurrection that Christ has had. Right? And everyone else is writing books and telling you what to do. You know what I'm talking about, the Koran or, you know, the Pali Canon or whatever religious set of books you're looking at. Right? Which one should I follow? Who's the one who's got the badge on that says I conquered death and I'm living now forever. And that just makes sense. It is a credible demand.

It's a credible demand to know that I'm going to answer to God who gave me the rules and Christ who fulfilled those rules and he's now going to stand in as my judge, even as my savior. He's still going to evaluate his servants. And this is a credible, reasonable thing. It's a credible and reasonable thing because something incredible has happened and that is he rose from the dead. Now, that sounds like an oxymoron, but at least write this down. The demand of truth is a credible demand. It's a demand, Letter "F," "That Is Credible" and as a credible demand, it's something you should say, "Well, it makes sense that I should do what he said. I should be a follower of Christ because he is risen from the dead.

Rising from the dead. That's not something I expect at funerals. Right? It doesn't happen, but it did happen. That's an incredible thing. But it's a credible thing in this sense. Not only does it give him credentials, but it makes sense that he would rise from the dead. Why? Because you got hundreds of years of all this prophecy, starting with back in the Garden. It's recorded in 1445, 46 B.C., when Moses writes down the story of Genesis 3 and the Fall and he says he even promised there that he would deal with this problem of sin and temptation and death. He would crush the tempter's head. That picture was at the beginning and continued to develop throughout the Old Testament. Death would be defeated. Beginning of Isaiah, death would be destroyed. Isaiah 53. This one would pour out his life to death and it would be acceptable as a payment for sin and he would rise from the dead and enjoy the spoils with the victors and he would live.

It makes sense because it is prophesied. It makes sense and it's credible because Christ comes on the scene and from the beginning says it. Did you read the Daily Bible Reading this morning? In our Daily Bible Reading we have Jesus there talking about this, or at least responding with a couple of words, when they accused him that you said you going to destroy the temple. But of course, in John, we know that the reality of that was he said, destroy this temple, my body, and I'll raise it up in three days. They use that as an accusation at the kangaroo court at the end of his earthly ministry. The point is that he predicted it before it



happened. Scripture prophesies and predicts it hundreds of years, he predicted it in his lifetime and then it happens.

And it happens in a way that should be a resonating reality for us that we think, of course, this is the problem with being a human being. We die and we don't want to die. We don't want to die, we don't want people around us that we love to die. We don't like death. Death is bad. No one cheers at funerals. I've done a ton of funerals. I've been to more funerals than you have unless you work at the mortuary. Right? No one is going like, "Yay!" They hate it. It's painful. It's awful. We in our hearts carry as the image bearers of God this reflection of eternity. We don't like death. Death is the problem. We fear it, we're enslaved to the fear of it.

And so it would be expected that if there's going to be a fix to this problem, we need someone to rise from the dead. It is a credible source of authority coming from someone who did the incredible thing that we all want and expect. He rose from the dead. Rose from the dead because we need the problem solved for us. We see the problem as death, but death was the payment for sin. In other words, "the wages of sin is death." That's the problem. So Christ comes and deals with the sin problem, reverses the death problem. And that's the thing I would expect from someone making the rules.

And then in time and space and we as historians look back and try and figure out what could have happened. This guy was dead, he was killed by professionals. I mean, now you can insert the sermons from Easter you always hear. This makes perfect sense. There's no other credible explanation. This incredible thing is a credible thing. It happened. And now he's saying, follow me and do what I say. And all we should be saying is, of course we should repent and join the team that's following Christ and believe. I mean, of course, because this is the most credible demand there is. Why do we believe the Bible? Because Christ rose from the dead. That's the cornerstone verification of the demand of truth. Obligated, to individuals, consequence, right, reasonable, credible. Now you got to respond.

And you should respond in the best way possible, which is the last of the three options. You got mockers, you got delayers, you got people then who respond by joining and believing. And of course, verse 30, repenting. You're going to respond not just to the gospel and maybe you need to respond to the gospel you're not a Christian, but now you're a Christian. You need to respond to every installment of truth that is given to you. And I'm saying every time you encounter truth in a sermon, in a Bible reading, in a Bible study, in a Christian book, you should, number two, "Weigh Your Response Carefully," weigh it really carefully.

We're going to do this really quick. What's the first response? They heard what was just a cornerstone piece of this, the resurrection of Christ, and they mocked. Right? They ridiculed it. They rolled their eyes. They taunted. They made fun of him. They said, "You're so dumb. That's so dumb. It's ridiculous." And they scoffed and said, "We're done. We're not interested in this." Ok? Here's the problem with responding that way. And some of you do scoff at things that the Bible says regarding the Christian life, because the world's telling you it's dumb to do what the Bible says. And even as Christians sometimes you mock.



Here's the thing about mockers. Letter "A." "Mockers Meet Their Maker." I'm not trying to be cute, but it sounds like it makes sense and it does make sense. Every mocker is going to meet their maker, whether they're a non-Christian who mocks the truth of the gospel or every Christian who mocks some aspect of the Christian life that they know they're obligated to do but they fight it by just somehow scorning that command. "I don't want to do that. I don't like it. It's dumb."

I know you don't think this is in the Bible, but here it is. Proverbs 3:34. "Toward the scorers," talking about God now, "he is scornful." You know what a scorner is, a mocker. To the mockers, when they meet their maker, the maker mocks them. Right? "To the humble he gives favor." To be humble and say, I'm going to do what my maker tells me, what Christ the judge tells me, he gives favor. To the ones who mock him, I mean, it sounds like so petty, doesn't it? Trust me, he has every right to do this. If you mock him, he mocks you, and that's no mistake. That's no misreading of the text.

Psalm 2 verses 4 and 5 will prove this to you. The people who rebel against God. They think his rules are dumb. They want to break off his bonds and his chords, it says "he holds them in derision." It starts with this, "He laughs at them." Right? God is going to clearly respond to the mockers. One day they'll have to face him and everyone who dismisses the gospel or let me say this as a preacher, everyone who takes a biblical sermon and turns their nose up at it and thinks it's silly and there are plenty of them. When we talk about domestic roles, we can talk about gender in our day that people are mocking. And if you go along with the world to mock the truth of God, all I'm going to tell you is you're going to meet your maker, the rule maker, and the maker of you.

So I would weigh that response carefully and hopefully you'll say, "Well, that's not me." But I do need more information and they seem to need more information because look what they did here in the bottom of verse 32. "Others said, 'We will hear you again about this.'" Now, read that sentence carefully. Look at it. I want you to highlight this word. We "might" hear you again about this. The word "might." Highlight the word "might." We might hear you... Is that what it says.? What does it say? We will. "We will hear again about this." "So we want to hear more. We'll hear you later on this." Well, this session was over, verse 33, "So Paul went out from their midst." So you're not going to hear it now. He's gone, but they think, "Buy he'll be back and we'll hear it later."

Chapter 18 verse 1. "After this Paul left Athens and he went on to Corinth." Well..., he's gone now. "I'll hear that, dude. Let's hear that Paul guy again from Tarsus. Let's hear him talk about the Jesus and I was starting to get convicted. I was kind of like Damaris and Dionysius. I was thinking, well, maybe it... maybe this feels like it's right. I just... I just needed more time to process." They delayed and what happened? They missed their opportunity here. I mean, maybe the rest of the missionary crew will come through and God will be gracious. But you never can be presumptuous about, "I will get to this later." You might not. And I'm not talking about non-Christians, even though that works and they were. They missed their window of opportunity thinking we will. Well, you don't know, as James says. You shouldn't say "we will" you should say, "If the Lord wills then we will do this or that. We'll live and do this or that."

So we can't be presumptuous because here's what happens. The doors, Letter "B," the "Doors Close on Delayers." And if you want to delay, you might have your door closed. And I mean that about preaching. I mean that about reading Christian books. I mean that about you grappling with some aspect of the Christian life. Do you think I can put that off for later? Well, maybe the conviction of God's Spirit that he's brought upon you to do the right thing and find the blessing that follows. Done. He's knocked on that door too many times. And that's going to be an area of your life that is going to trip you up. It'll be the besetting sin in your life because you just did not respond and you don't respond. And I'm just telling you don't delay. If you get convicted on anything, service, giving, attendance, evangelism, prayer, whatever it might be, do it. Don't delay. And that's a theme I could explore with you from Hebrews 3, Hebrews 4. If you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. The Spirit's at work knocking on the door. Get it done. Get it done now.

Well, then there were some thankfully, like Dionysius, like Damaris, like others that he doesn't name here who did a few things. Right? We know from verse 30 they repented, right? And we know from verse 34 they joined Paul. That means more than just Paul, because Paul was going to leave in a day. But they joined his teaching. They adopted this theology, and they believed, they trusted. So that's good. They were followers. They became followers. And followers get a lot, but let me summarize, at least for the non-Christian here, Letter "C," "Followers Are Forgiven." They get forgiven. They get forgiven and if you're a Christian, thinking of some aspect of observing the truth in the Christian life, you get all the blessings that go with that.

Here's a great proverb. "Fools," this is Proverbs 14:9, Proverbs 14:9, "The fool mocks at the guilt offering," because the guilt offering, you burn it all up, you don't get to have any. "You mean I'm going to bring my bull to the church and they're going to burn it up. And it doesn't even go to the light bill. We don't even get the Levites fed over this. It just burned up?" "The fools mock at the guilt offering, but the upright enjoys acceptance." That's just a great line. The upright say, "Well, if God said it, I do it. And it doesn't have to make sense. It doesn't have to be the thing that I think, well, surely this is like... It does make sense and you need to understand God's rules make sense even if you can't, in his inscrutable wisdom, understand it at this time. Do what he says. Do what is clear in his word. Not only do you get forgiveness and grace, you'll get acceptance and mercy and blessing. It all goes with that.

When I thought about hearing that train this week, thinking about Snidely. Snidely, is that his name? What was his last name again? Whiplash. Snidely Whiplash. And I thought about, you know, Dudley Do-Right coming and freeing her. Let's just picture standing on that platform. You see where my crazy mind goes. I was thinking that I thought when I said to myself and I wrote it down, I wrote down like "train platform." Well, I was in Chicago. I lived in Chicago back in the eighties, which moving from Long Beach to Chicago was a jolt. And train platforms... Now, I know Chicago got gentrified after that, and now it's kind of back to where it was. But that was a scary place to be on a train platform, right? I was looking over my shoulder, I remember going to my ministries, long story. But I was very vigilant there because



you might have to dodge a few bullets on the train platform. And, you know, even a guy on the other side of the train platform, I'm looking at everybody. You know, I got to be vigilant

Here's the thing. Picture it this way. You're Christian. Christ has taken you, freed you, it's called redemption, off of the tracks and put you on the train platform. You can't relax. Right? Now you got to be like Road Runner, who's very deft. Like when the anvil's falling. He's like, you know, jumping around, or the cannonballs coming at him. He's just so good to get around it all the time. And I'm just saying this when you become a Christian, you become the target of the enemy. First Peter Chapter 5. "He's a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." And all I'm telling you is you got to be deft, you got to be agile. You've got to say I am not going to in some way fall into the pattern of rolling my eyes at God's commands, or I'm going to somehow just say, "Well, I'll think about it, I'll delay this." You got to do it. You got to do what God says.

And this is so important for us. And it feels like the Christian life is going to be frenetic and I'm going to be uncomfortable and be like standing on that train platform always dodging the enemy. Welcome to the club. Right? But one day it'll end and you can look back like Paul did at the end of Second Timothy and you'll say, "I fought the good fight, I finished the course, I have kept the faith." I did it, and now "is laid up for me this crown." It'll be good. We're going to enter our rest. Right? Hebrews 4, we'll get there. But right now it's about responding rightly to God's revealed truth. Just like the Athenians, some of them did. We need to do it every time we encounter God's truth.

Let's pray. God, help us, please to be responders of your word. Make us good at it in the sense that we're quick to respond. We welcome the word. We're excited about what you teach and what you reveal. And when we hear it and we understand it and we ponder it aright, I pray we would not delay. We will be quick to be obedient because we love you, we love your truth, and we're going to avoid all the things that the enemy's going to throw in our minds to make us think that we can make an excuse or rationalize or do something else. God, the days are drawing near to that day that you fixed for us to meet you and to meet your Son and see him and look into his eyes. The one who will evaluate our lives. God help us. Prepare us. Get us ready for that.

In Jesus name, Amen.